



The Mini Page

Betty Debnam, Founding Editor and Editor at Large



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African-American Political Milestones

A Long Journey

On Jan. 20, Barack Obama became the 44th president of the United States. This was the first time an African-American had been elected to this powerful position.

The brave and noble actions of many people over hundreds of years helped pave the way for President Obama.

In honor of Black History Month, The



President Barack Obama

Mini Page looks at some of the people and events that brought America to this point. We have grown from a country where it was legal to enslave people with dark skin to a country that elected a black man as president.

All men are created equal

America was founded on the idea of equality. The Declaration of Independence states:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ...”

But in 1776, a lot of people were left out. Women had few rights. Slavery was still legal. And only property-owning men could vote.

Still, the idea of equality is so strong that Americans keep working toward it all the time.



art courtesy Library of Congress

This illustration from 1881 shows some of the most famous black political leaders from that time. At the left center is Blanche K. Bruce, and on the right is Hiram Revels, the only two black U.S. senators from the 19th century. In the center is Frederick Douglass, the first black person to be appointed to high posts in the U.S. government. His jobs included counsel general to Haiti and U.S. marshal.

All men are created free

Abraham Lincoln built on the Declaration of Independence when he issued the Emancipation Proclamation to free the slaves in Confederate states.

He referred to the declaration again in his Gettysburg Address in 1863. He reminded people that our nation was “dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”



painting by F.B. Carpenter; engraved by A.H. Ritchie, c1866, courtesy Library of Congress

President Lincoln first reads the Emancipation Proclamation to his Cabinet. The proclamation was issued in two parts, in 1862 and 1863.

Civil rights

Soon after the Civil War ended, the United States passed three **amendments**, or changes, to the Constitution to protect the rights of newly freed slaves.

In 1865, the 13th Amendment officially ended slavery. The 14th Amendment, passed in 1868, granted equal protection to all persons. In 1870, the 15th Amendment banned racial restrictions in voting.

Soon after the Civil War ended, black people were elected to important positions in government, including the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.



Working for Equal Rights

Laws against equal rights

Within a few years after the Civil War, some people began fighting against rights for African-Americans. In the South, communities made laws forbidding black and white people from using the same facilities. Black people could not use the same restrooms, schools, restaurants or transportation as white people.

Communities also limited black people's right to vote. New laws and threats made it impossible for most African-Americans to vote.



Laws forbidding black and white people from using the same facilities were called Jim Crow laws.



In 1957, federal troops were sent to protect black students trying to go to school in Little Rock, Ark. Today it seems strange to think black and white students could not go to school together. But in 1954, after the Supreme Court ruled that school segregation* was illegal, white protesters used violence to try to keep black students from attending formerly white schools.

“Separate but equal”

In the late 1800s, shoemaker Homer Plessy boarded a train restricted to white passengers. Although Plessy was seven-eighths white and one-eighth black, under the law in Louisiana, where he boarded, a person with any African ancestors was considered to be black.

After Plessy was arrested, he took the case to court. In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled against him. It said it was OK to have separate but equal facilities.

The fight for civil rights

People of all ethnic groups continued to fight for civil rights. In 1920, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was passed, giving women of all races the right to vote.

It soon became obvious that “separate but equal” laws did not actually give black people equal facilities. For example, schools for black kids were not as nice as those for white kids. Black students did not have the same quality of schools or textbooks.

In 1954, there was another famous court case, Brown vs. the Board of Education. Brave parents and students challenged the laws that kept black kids from getting a good education.

This case **overturned**, or reversed, the findings from the Plessy case. This time the court ruled that “separate but equal” schools were not really equal. School segregation became illegal.

***Segregation is separating people based on their skin color.**



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Mini Spy ...



Mini Spy and her friends are at a Martin Luther King Day celebration. See if you can find: • man in the moon • mushroom



- question mark
- peanut
- elephant
- muffin
- sailboat
- acorn • butterfly
- word MINI
- number 3
- comb • heart
- bell • lima bean
- safety pin
- donkey • duck
- pumpkin



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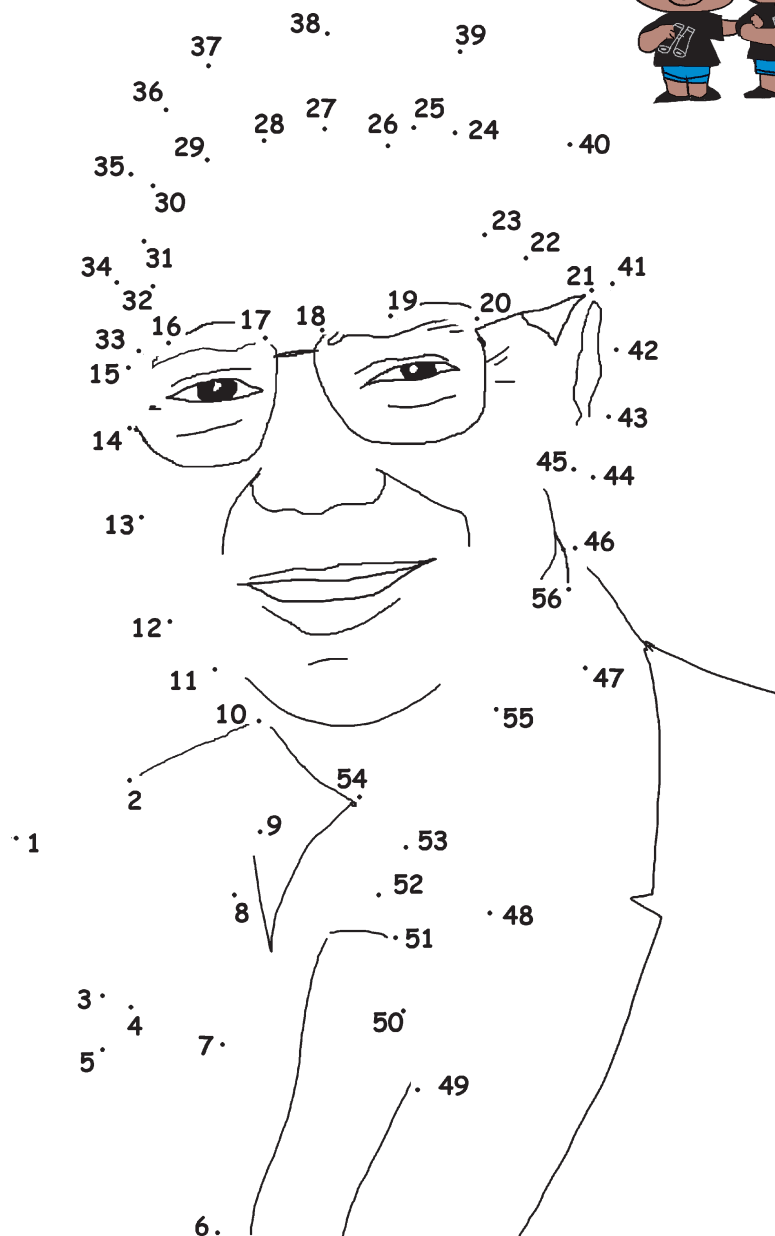
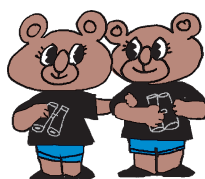
African-American History TRY 'N FIND

Words that remind us of black history are hidden in the block below. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally. See if you can find: OBAMA, PRESIDENT, CIVIL, CONSTITUTION, AMENDMENT, IDEA, VOTE, FREE, EMANCIPATION, PROCLAMATION, ALL, MEN, KID, WOMEN, ELECT, POSTS, SEPARATE, COURT, LAW, SEGREGATION.



V P P C M T N E M D N E M A C
O R F O I E S E P A R A T E O
T E K R S V N L A N E M O W U
E S W I E T I M A L A E D I R
O I E L D E S L N W L L A K T
B D L N O I T U T I T S N O C
A E E N O I T A M A L C O R P
M N C N O I T A P I C N A M E
A T T V N O I T A G E R G E S

Go dot to dot and color this former secretary of state.



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Rookie Cookie's Recipe Chickpea Salad

You'll need:

- 1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas (garbanzo beans), drained
- 1/2 cup diced cucumber
- 1 cup cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 cup diced carrots
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon olive oil



What to do:

1. Add chickpeas and all vegetables to a medium bowl.
2. Combine vinegars and oil in a small bowl. Stir briskly with a whisk or fork.
3. Pour vinegar mixture over chickpeas and vegetables.
4. Chill for several hours to combine flavors.

**You will need an adult's help with this recipe.*

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Meet Brandon Mychal Smith

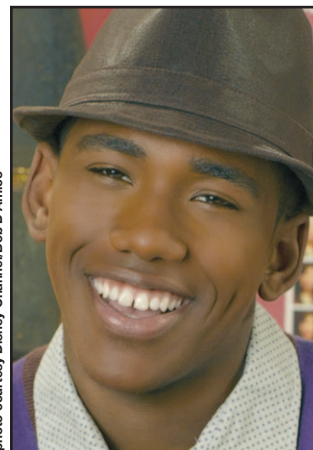


photo courtesy Disney Channel/Bob D'Amico

Brandon Mychal Smith stars as Nico in the Disney Channel series "Sonny With a Chance." His other movies include the made-for-TV movie "The Ron Clark Story," for which he won a Family Television Award and Young Artist Award, and "Gridiron Gang."

He has also acted in several TV shows, such as "That's So Raven" and "Phil of the Future."

Brandon, 19, lives in Los Angeles. He started acting when he was 8 years old.

He soon began appearing in commercials.

He has a younger sister and loves to roller-skate.

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MIGHTY
FUNNY'S

Mini Jokes

All the following jokes have something in common. Can you guess the common theme or category?

Ernest: Why didn't the omelet laugh?
Eleanor: It didn't get the yolk!



Elsie: What do we call very large eggs?
Elmer: Eggstra-large!



Edgar: How do monsters like their eggs prepared?
Eddie: Terrified!

Gaining Ground

A scary time

In 1955, a black woman, Rosa Parks, refused to give up her seat on a city bus in Montgomery, Ala., to a white passenger. Other black women had made similar protests, but Rosa's simple action sparked a year-long bus **boycott*** in Montgomery. This was the beginning of the civil rights movement.

*A boycott is a refusal to buy a product or use a service.

Under the leadership of people like Martin Luther King Jr., people of all colors took part in nonviolent protests against **discrimination**, or unfairness.

But many people reacted violently to these protests. They bombed schools and businesses and beat people up. In 1963, a white man bombed a church in Birmingham, Ala., where civil rights leaders met. Four young girls were killed.

It took a lot of courage for people to continue to work for equal rights when they knew it could cost them their jobs or even their lives.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote that people have a moral responsibility to disobey laws that are not fair. He pointed out that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. If one person's rights can be taken away, then maybe your rights might be taken away next.



Martin Luther King Jr.

The Mini Page thanks Esther J. Washington, director of education, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, for help with this issue.

Next week The Mini Page celebrates Newspapers in Education Week.



In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law.

photo by Frank Wolfe, courtesy LBJ Library

Major victories

In 1964 African-Americans won a major victory. The Civil Rights Act became law, making forced segregation and job discrimination illegal.

In 1965, another important bill was signed into law. The Voting Rights Act made it illegal to deny any citizen the right to vote because of race. It made literacy tests and all other voting discrimination illegal. It backed up the 15th Amendment.

Changing viewpoints

Changing the laws was only part of the battle. People also had to work to get rid of **prejudice**, or bad feelings against a person or group.

One area where people's ideas changed was in TV and movies. Until the 1960s, black people were usually given roles that made them seem stupid, or they were cast as servants or criminals.



Civil rights leaders worked to educate people about how destructive this was. They put pressure on TV networks and movie studios to change.

Think about the shows you watch. Do you still see prejudice against African-Americans? How about against other groups, such as overweight people or Arab people?

Trailblazers

Joseph Rainey was the first black person to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. After serving in Congress, he became a banker.



Joseph Rainey (1832-1887)

art by Simmie Knox, 2004, Collection of U.S. House of Representatives



photo courtesy Library of Congress

Shirley Chisholm (1924-2005)

Shirley Chisholm was the first black woman elected to Congress. She was also the first black woman to run for president in a major party.

Blanche Kelso Bruce was the first African-American to serve in the U.S. Senate for a full term. He was born into slavery. At the Republican Party convention in 1888, he received 11 votes for vice president.



art by Simmie Lee Knox, courtesy U.S. Senate

Blanche Kelso Bruce (1841-1898)



photo courtesy of U.S. Senate Historical Office

Carol Moseley Braun (1947 -)

Carol Moseley Braun was the first African-American woman elected to the U.S. Senate. She later served as U.S. ambassador to New Zealand.

Gen. Colin Powell was the first African-American to serve as U.S. secretary of state.



photo courtesy U.S. Dept. of State

Colin Powell (1937 -)

Look through your newspaper for stories about human rights struggles. What are people doing to help?

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